



Educating Residents on Austin's Natural Assets

Item C-27

Educating Residents on Tree Preservation & Conservation

This proposal would establish a position to educate residents on tree preservation and conservation.

- This proposal would create a pilot “Tree Education” position with the City Arborist that would engage residents at schools, community events, and elsewhere on the value of trees and the importance of conservation.
- This position would be modeled on a similar position in the Watershed Protection Department and would build on the City Arborist’s existing communications efforts by adding outreach and engagement services in the community.

The city can fund this proposal entirely through existing resources.

- The city would fund this position entirely within existing resources in the Urban Forest Replenishment Fund.
- The Urban Forest Replenishment Fund is funded through fees that developers pay for tree mitigation; the city can use these fees to promote tree care & preservation, and urban forest conservation, among other tree-related services.

Item H-22

Connecting Children with Nature in the Eastern Crescent

This proposal would invest in a marketing and outreach effort to better connect children with nature.

- Under this proposal, the city would invest \$17,500 in building a marketing & media toolkit, including Spanish-language materials, to raise public awareness in Austin’s “Eastern Crescent” of the benefits of connecting to nature.
- This proposal would implement a key part of the Parks and Recreation Department (PARC)’s plan to better connect children with the natural environment, including via a pilot program installing natural playgrounds at school parks.

This proposal would implement a key part of the city’s strategic plan to better connect children with nature.

- Last year, a wide variety of government and community stakeholders completed a strategic plan to better connect children to nature in Austin, including staff from 11 city departments, Austin Independent School District, UT School of Public Health, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Dell Children’s Medical Center, Westcave Preserve, YMCA of Austin, Texas Children in Nature, and the Children in Nature Collaborative of Austin.¹
- That plan found that there is “a general lack of knowledge and understanding of the benefits to children who have regular interaction with nature” and recommended a marketing and outreach campaign to address this issue.
- This year, the Austin Parks Foundation (APF) is partnering with PARC to fund ongoing efforts to implement this strategic plan. However, PARC still lacks the resources needed to implement the marketing and outreach strategy.

Research shows the importance of connecting children to nature and of parks-related marketing and outreach.

- Extensive research confirms that urban nature improves health, happiness, & mental capacity, among other things.²
- A recent RAND study found that residents used parks less often in less affluent communities – and that one of the major reasons for this disparity was a lack of marketing and outreach efforts.³
- That same RAND study found that marketing and outreach efforts were associated with an over 60 percent increase in weekly time spent on moderate or vigorous physical activity in parks.

¹ “Cities Connecting Children to Nature Implementation Plan,” City of Austin (16 September 2016).

² Eric Jaffe, “The (Pretty Much Totally) Complete Health Case for Urban Nature,” CityLab (20 October 2015).

³ RAND Corporation, “The First National Study of Neighborhood Parks,” American Journal of Preventive Medicine (30 May 2016).